

Above and beyond ...

Marine swims way to victory in Recruit Training

CPL. JENNIFER BROFER
STAFF WRITER

Private First Class Robert Trego, Platoon 1104, Delta Co., graduates today after a 13-week journey to become a Marine.

So far, his Marine Corps experience tops his long list of accomplishments. However, he may never have marched across the parade deck had it not been for his unrelenting desire to be the best – that, and his love of swimming, which began as a childhood hobby and transformed into an invaluable tool that has helped him throughout life and recruit training.

Trego’s love of swimming began on the sunny beaches of Jacksonville, Fla.

“My mom took us to the beach one day, and she couldn’t get me out of the water,” said the 18 year old.

It was then that his love of swimming grew, as well as his competitive spirit.

His mother began taking him to swim competitions in middle school during the summer, where he excelled in his division and won all of his races. He placed first in the 50-yard breaststroke and again in the 100-yard individual medley all three years. Swimming was not the only sport he excelled in. By the time he reached high school, he had lettered in swimming, soccer, football and track.

In high school, Trego continued to

put forth effort into sports, but focused most of his energy on his swimming skills. He swam year round, which helped him win the Florida State Championships for his district in the 100-yard breaststroke.

Shortly after, he qualified for the Junior Olympic National Team, where he took home the gold medal in the 100-yard breaststroke and the 200-yard individual medley. As successful as he was, he felt there were no further job opportunities for him on the team, so he left, ending his swimming career. Though he stopped swimming competitively, his passion for the sport never ceased.

“I guess swimming was my forte in life,” revealed the self-described “sports freak.”

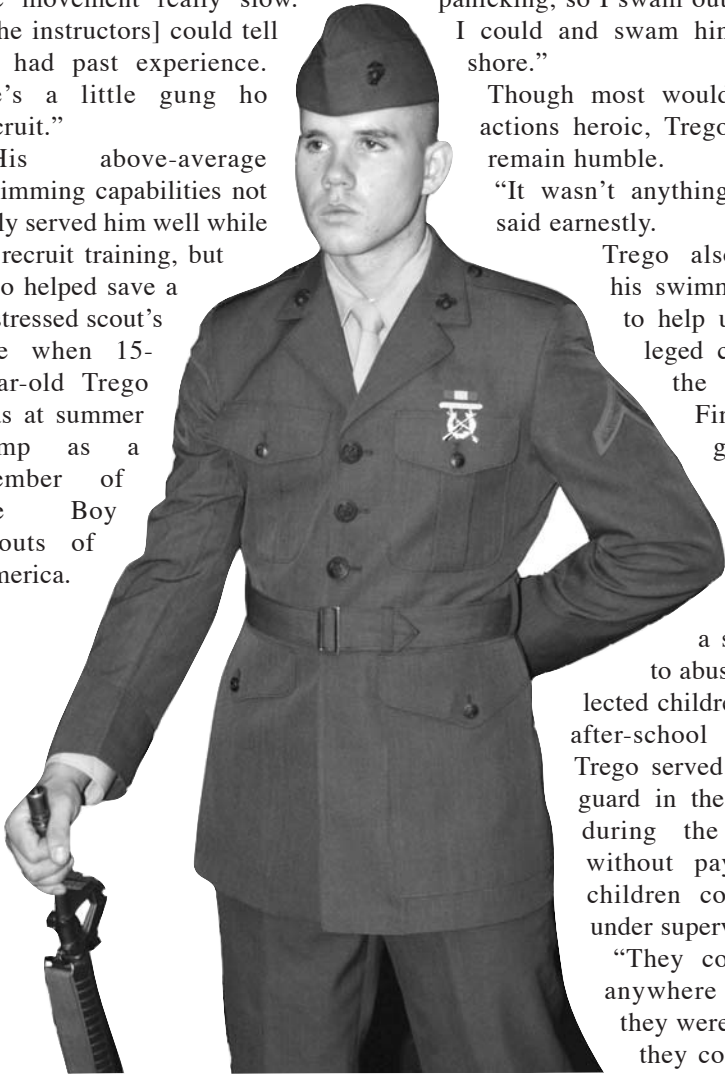
At the time, he had no way of knowing that his “forte in life” would eventually help him after he stepped onto the yellow footprints. During recruit swim qualification, Trego achieved Combat Water Safety Swimmer One, which is a rarely accomplishment by recruits.

For CWSS One, instructors attempt to pull the recruits underwater with all their weight, to see if the recruits can execute a movement properly in order to escape their grasp.

“He almost made one of the swim instructors tap out,” admitted Staff Sgt. Will Cuellar, Trego’s senior drill instructor. “They stress to the recruits to take it slow and go all the

way to the bottom, but most recruits just get out of it real fast and go to the top. [Trego] took him all the way to the bottom, and he executed the movement really slow. [The instructors] could tell he had past experience. He’s a little gung ho recruit.”

His above-average swimming capabilities not only served him well while in recruit training, but also helped save a distressed scout’s life when 15-year-old Trego was at summer camp as a member of the Boy Scouts of America.



“I was at Camp Shands and we were out doing swim qual lessons for a merit badge, and he started drifting out,” explained Trego. “I saw him panicking, so I swam out as fast as I could and swam him back to shore.”

Though most would find his actions heroic, Trego chose to remain humble.

“It wasn’t anything big,” he said earnestly.

Trego also applied his swimming skills to help underprivileged children in the Families

First program, a non-profit organization that provides a safe haven to abused or neglected children through after-school programs. Trego served as a lifeguard in the mornings during the summer, without pay, so the children could swim under supervision.

“They couldn’t go anywhere because they were poor, and they couldn’t pay

a lifeguard,” said Trego. “But, I like helping little kids.”

Aside from swimming, Trego was also an active member of the Boy Scouts of America and Navy Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps while in high school. However, even with all his prior training, he said nothing could have prepared him for the mental anguish he had to withstand from the drill instructors upon arrival.

“This is a lot more exhausting,” admitted Trego. “It doesn’t hit you ‘til you get here. Marine Corps boot camp is more than anything I ever imagined.”

Trego, who enlisted as an infantryman, said he aspires to go into Force Recon one day to become a Marine Corps Instructor Trainer of Water Survival, or possibly a firefighter like his dad, in order to “save more lives.”

Throughout his life, Trego has relied upon himself to go “above and beyond” and be “the best of the best” in every facet of his life, whether academically or in sports.

However, the journey to become a Marine taught him that he is far from perfect, with a lot more lessons to be learned along the way.

“I’m glad I became a Marine because it taught me a lot more discipline and team work,” he said. “Now I have to rely on other people, not just myself.”

Depot Marines pass, punt, rush over Beaufort PALS teams

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Depot Marines, in conjunction with Marine Corps Community Services-South Carolina, formed a flag football squad to compete in the Beaufort Parks and Leisure Services 2003 Men’s Flag Football league. After having beaten every team in the league, a probable league championship for MCCS Parris Island is on the horizon.

This is the first year that MCCS-SC has fielded a team for the league, but that has not prevented the Marines from taking down all of their opponents. The team sits atop the league standings with a 5-2 record and feels confident their success will carry

over into the post season.

“We’re by far the most talented team in the league,” said Head Coach Ray Glover. “There is no reason why we should get beat.”

The MCCS PI players hail from various Depot flag football teams, forming an unofficial all-star team for the Depot. By playing on the PALS team, the Marines are able to gain a sense of satisfaction that may not have been otherwise attainable on their respective Depot squads.

“They’re all enjoying the experience because they get to see all the other talent and how it comes together,” said Glover, who is the staff NCOIC of the Depot Combat Visual Information Center. “I just enjoy watching to see who’s going to explode next.”

Glover said that his players’ speed, agility and discipline enable them to have an advantage over the civilian teams. Although the civilians may not enjoy being out-played by the newcomers, all have been receptive to the Marines.

“The feedback that I’ve gotten from all the other teams is that they enjoy playing with us,” said Glover. “They say they enjoy ‘beating up on Marines,’ so to speak.”

The PALS league is a contact flag football league, allowing players to all but tackle one another. This differs from the MCCS-SC league where the actual flags are the only things that can be touched on the person in possession of the ball. The PALS

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- MCCS PI Head Coach Ray Glover

league enables the games to be more like regulation football.

“This league is way more physical,” said Glover. “This is as close as we can get to full contact football.”

Competing in the league has done more than allow the Marines to relish in flag football

success, however. Glover said that playing in the league has put the Marines in an advantageous position.

“It benefits us by allowing us to get involved in the community,” said Glover. “By being the only military team, we can promote the Marine Corps in a positive light.”

Glover said that he would like to start a tradition with the PALS league and return next year with a team, but was concerned about schedule conflicts. MCCS-SC tried sponsoring a team last year, but had to deal with disorganization and absences, forcing the team to drop out before the season’s end.

“I’d like to come back next year, but it’s hard because of bas-

ketball and all the Marines who take leave for the holidays,” said Glover. “I’d really want to thank MCCS for sponsoring us this year and for all their support.”

Glover said he has been disappointed in one area. Although the team is a representative of the Depot and has achieved such success, he said that no one really comes to watch the games. MCCS PI was scheduled to play for the season championship against Carolina Sports Care at Burton Wells Park Monday. The playoffs championship is scheduled to take place Sunday at Burton Wells.

For more information, contact Johnny Davis, athletic director for Beaufort PALS, at 470-6211 or 812-8692.